

NIGHT HER MOTHER WENT TO DEATH CHARLOTTE HAD NO INKBLING OF EVIL

Picnic With Halls Made Happy Day Before Murders

What simple events sometimes precede great tragedies! On the day before Mrs. Eleanor Mills and the Rev. Edward Hall were murdered on a lonely New Jersey farm, they were on a merry little picnic together. Mrs. Hall was there too. Perhaps she could not help but notice the attentions which her husband and Mrs. Mills paid to each other. What were her thoughts? What were her reactions?

Charlotte Mills, daughter of the slain woman, describes the events preceding the famous Hall-Mills murder, and she tells of the night when her mother left their drab little home, never to return alive. Here is the significant background of the tragedy, told by the one who knows it best.

My Own Story of My Mother's



Love and
Murder

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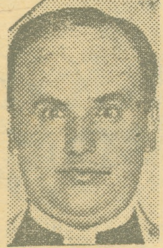
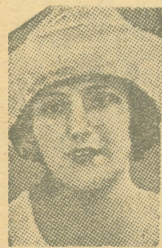
SEPTEMBER 14,
1922

The frightful day that stands out from among the other days of my life like some horrible specter grinning at me: September 14, 1922.

But let me go back a little to the day before.

September 13 was lovely, warm and a little hazy. A fine day for a picnic, and that is what they had—a picnic. I didn't go, but mother went, of course. She went in one of the Hall automobiles. Mr. Hall drove.

Mother had got up early to make sandwiches to take along. She didn't feel very well, but thought the trip would do her good. She had had a serious illness in February, just seven months before,



Mrs. Eleanor Mills Rev. E.W. Hall

and had been operated on at the Hospital for kidney trouble. There was an abscess, too, and the complications caused us terrible worry. Mother had never been quite so strong since that time.

But she was not one to fuss over herself. She hated being sick and loathed staying in bed. She told the doctors she knew her own strength, and promised not to overdo, and they told her she could gradually take up her old favorite sport of swimming. She used to go down to the beach with my aunts and uncles, and sometimes with us youngsters, and swim.

She had two or three fainting spells that summer, but always laughed at our fears about her, although I think once in a while she felt a little worried about herself, because her heart wasn't so awfully good.

When they got to the picnic grounds, and mother started to walk up the hill with the others, she began to feel queer, and had that pain around her heart and a shortness of breath. She stopped a minute, but went on again, and when she got to the place where they were to spread the lunch she looked so white and weak that Mr. Hall said he would fix a place for her to rest.

He went back and got some cushions out of the automobile and made a seat for her on the ground. She sort of lay down, and he put the robe over her.

Gift Refused

Later on, at the picnic, when mother felt better and was helping pass around the things to eat, she offered Mr. Hall one of the sandwiches she had made. She knew it was the kind he liked best—tuna fish—and she had specially made it with him in mind. Mrs. Hall looked at her very coldly and firmly and said: "No, thank you, he won't care for it; we have brought plenty of sandwiches ourselves."

Mother told me that when she got home, and seemed to feel it deeply. I said: "Oh, don't you care, Moms. You know Mr. Hall would have loved that sandwich."

And she smiled. "Yes, Muggs, I guess he would."

Well, next day I went to school as usual and came home around supper time. Mother was preparing supper.

It was a sort of stew of liver and kidney and things I hated. Mother had very little money for house-keeping. If she hadn't studied up and taught herself how to use up leftovers and make nice dishes out of cheap cuts of meat, I don't know how we ever would have got along. She used to cook lots of vegetables and fruits, but we never had very much meat, or expensive cuts, and she always used every scrap to make stews or hash croquettes with potatoes.

Hated Stews

Dan and I always fussed about eating stews and hashes, but mother made us do it.

"Your father wants meat," she'd say, "and I have to get the kinds I can afford. It's plenty good enough for you children, and if you don't want to eat it, make your meal of other things. I can't cook special dishes for you. You must learn to like everything."

She would have loved to fix delicious things for us, but that was her German, thrifty way—to make

us eat what was there, and be satisfied.

"Well, on this particular Thursday afternoon, September 14, I remember how disgusted I felt when



James Mills



Dan Mills

I saw the kidney stew for supper, and nothing else but a few pears. Had I known what was going to be my mother's fate that very night I would have cut off my right hand rather than have been even the tiniest bit miffy.

Promised Treat

She made some laughing remark and pinched my chin and told me to be a good girl and not be finicky, and maybe we'd "see about it later." I took it to mean we might have ice cream or something.

As I have written before, I was knitting a sweater, and when mother said she was going out I told her I'd go over to Aunt Joe's and have her show me how to turn the shoulder of the sweater.

"Oh, you wait for me, kid," mother said, and hurried out.

But I didn't. I went on over to my aunt's. I never saw my mother again, alive or dead.

Dan and I came home around

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10' or so. I was tired and went to bed. Father was in bed, too. It must have been somewhere near midnight when father came to my room and said, "Your mother isn't home yet, do you know where she went?" or something like that.

Not Worried

I was too sleepy to say much. I mumbled something, and father went away. I suppose he was worried, finding mother hadn't come in. I wasn't worried at all—not even the next morning when she still wasn't home. I had such confidence in mother. Whatever she did, or didn't do, was all right with

me. She knew what she was about and would always do the right and sensible thing. I supposed she had stayed over night with one of my aunts and that was all there was to it. I got breakfast and went off to school.

That afternoon I went for a canoe ride with some high school pals, and it wasn't till Dan came around that I recalled mother hadn't been home, and asked him if she had got back. He said no, and looked kind of worried, and we went home together, and father

(Continued on Page 24)

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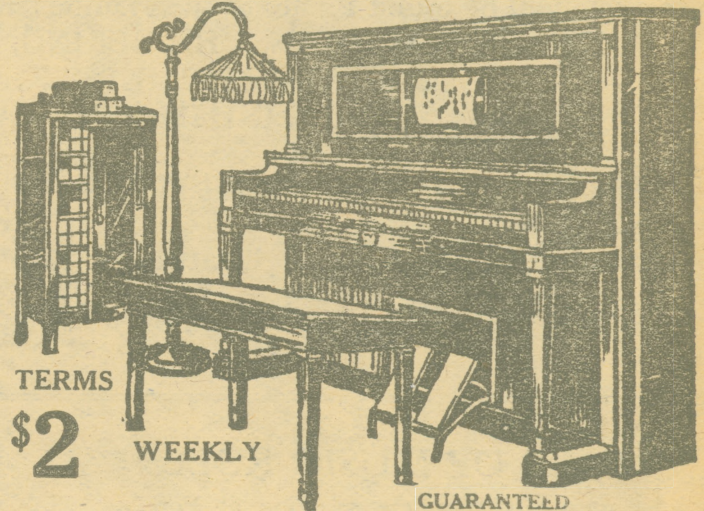
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